

ment by constables to justices has broken down, and a long wail arises, that thieves are multiplied, the poor are neglected, and vagrants wander to and fro at their will.¹⁸¹ The administrative collapse of the Elizabethan Poor Law continued after the Restoration, and twenty-three years later Sir Matthew Hale complained that the sections in it relating to the provision of employment were a dead letter.^{12*} Always unpopular with the local authorities, whom they involved in considerable trouble and expense, it is not surprising that, with the cessation of pressure by the Central Government, they should, except here and there, have been neglected. What is more significant, however, than the practical deficiencies in the administration of relief, was the rise of a new school of opinion, which regarded with repugnance the whole body of social theory of which both private charity and public relief had been the expression.

<('The generall rule of all England/' wrote a pamphleteer in 1646, "is to whip and punish the wandring beggars . . . and so many justices execute one branch of that good Statute (which is the point of justice), but as for the point of charitie, they leave [it] undone, which is to provide houses and convenient places to set the poore to work/'¹ ^{1M} The House of Commons appears to have been conscious that the complaint

had some
foundation ; in 1649 it ordered that the
county justices
should be required to see that stocks of
material were
provided as the law required,¹⁸⁴ and the
question of pre-
paring new legislation to ensure that
persons in distress
should be found employment was on several
occasions
referred to committees of the .House."⁵
Nothing
seems, however, to have come of these
proposals, nor
was the Elizabethan policy of " setting the
poor on
work " that which was most congenial to
the temper
of the time. Upon the admission that
distress was the
result, not of personal deficiencies, but of
economic
causes, with its corollary that its victims
had a legal